

Apply Board Insights:

Most of the obvious stuff about good FITREPS and trends you already know about. A few items might be new to you, so I will mention those:

- * Taking the tough jobs and doing well in them was probably one of the key things looked at.
- * The absolute marks you get on FITREP are not as critical as your trend and marks in relation to the reporting senior's average. It was clearly understood that some reporting seniors rate harder than others.
- * It was OK to be ranked behind others, but if you stayed there, or were in a critical billet (XO) it became a question as to why you were ranked behind the other(s). Sometimes the FITREP explained, sometimes it did not.
- * It was expected that when you put on a new rank or took a new job, your trend would drop at first, but then it should show improvement in your subsequent FITREPs with that reporting senior.
- * Missing FITREPs were a big issue. There sure were a lot of them and they make the record look like they don't care to keep it current. Often repeated, but really true, you should check what they have on you...
- * No History filled out on the APPLY program. In the billet slating process the record is not present, just the person's requests, their confidence score, and their choices. The only history we had to try and see if they had the right background for the job, was the APPLY PROGRAM history section. Some folks didn't fill it out. Big mistake.
- * Leadership was a big factor for Command slots. Be sure your FITREP says something about leadership. Hopefully something positive.
- * Recommendations were also looked at. A few people were never recommended for Command, so we took that to mean the reporting senior did not think they were up to it. Hopefully it wasn't just an oversight.
- * Homesteading was highly frowned upon. If you do get stuck in the same unit for a long period of time, it is critical to show a progression of more and more responsibility. As your expertise grows with the Parent Command, you should also be contributing more and more to PCS and be a significant player in major active events.
- * Lots of active duty support, especially in support of NE/EF were looked upon in a positive light. Again, the hard jobs, like Bosnia, were recognized and rewarded.

- * Varied background experiences were generally a positive thing. Never serving in your community might be a negative thing, unless your service outside your designator was of an exceptional high nature.
- * The VTU was not a show stopper, but you had to remain very active in the VTU and show contribution. It seemed to be better if you showed it to an active command or to a unit supporting an active command than if you just were supportive of the reserve center, although the type and quality of support provided made the biggest difference.
- * The letter to the board can be very helpful. There was a lot of "I don't know what happened here..." sort of comments. Why make the presenter guess? But do keep the letters reasonable. The 30+ page letters just made everyone less accepting of your record. The 60+ page letters really made you start to question their judgement.
- * Hard jobs are recognized over easy jobs and appropriately briefed. Don't be afraid to point out the hard jobs you have served in (not all of them were obvious). Don't be afraid to point out any qualifications (e.g. BGO) that you may have that wouldn't show up as an NOBC. Mention NOBCs that you have applied for, or are working towards.
- * Although the board was very professional about keeping the overall good of the Navy as the primary focus of the proceedings, the service community (e.g. 1325) had some sway over the board. It helps to be recognized and respected by your community in order to get the highest confidence factors. There were some outstanding exceptions.
- * Education, civilian employment and awards were looked at briefly. They can be helpful in getting your confidence factor up just a tad and that can make a big difference when the slating comes around since it is largely done in confidence order. Education/employment was looked at again when the slating happened since some billets are looking for certain backgrounds.
- * The first week was used to brief each applicant and give them a "confidence" factor, from 0 to 100. All of the above considerations were used to brief each applicant and then the board voted for the confidence factor.
- * The second week was used to slot people into billets. Usually we looked at the highest confidence people, and then looked at their choices of billets. If they asked for things that were not practical for them, they wasted those top spots as we scanned down the list of other people who had the same or nearly the same confidence factors. Let me explain this by an example,

Bill had a confidence factor of 93% and wanted job XR8856 as his 1st choice,

Marty also had a confidence factor of 93%, but he had job XR8856 as his 32nd choice. In cases like this we skipped looking at Marty (figuring he would get something closer to his #1 choice) and gave the job to Bill. But if Marty had made it his 3rd choice, we would take a look at him too. My point is, some people had impractical choices wasted on their first few priorities and if they would have had a realistic choice up in the first few, they would have gotten it. As it was, they were skipped and later we ran out of billets they were eligible for before they got assigned.

* People asked for billets for which they were not eligible, for example, CAPTs for CDR billets, LCDRs for CDR billets, etc. The slotting is done on different panels, it is not a good idea to use your choices for this. Likewise people asked for SEAL billets with no background or training, or SPAWAR billets or Science billets with no science background. This amounts to a wasted choice.

* Many people did not fill out enough choices. When we got to their name, all of their choices were gone. We would have given them their #8 choice, but they didn't bother filling in more than 7. We did come back and try to fill some of these in to anything that would fit (if they chose "Y" to accept any billet), but then you are depending on a group of people who likely don't know you to choose for you. Doesn't it make more sense to choose for yourself? Unless you really only want one of those 7 you listed and no others.

* Many people had unrealistic travel limitations, or screwy limitations such as will accept any billet that airline xxx travels to with only one hop from yyy airport. The board doesn't know this. Decide whether you will travel or not. Be prepared to not get a billet if you won't. If you elect to take the weak billet because it is closer to home, you might get it, but you have determined the fate for the next round of the apply program.

* Get NOBCs for those things you have accomplished. They did make a difference in close decisions. If two people for a billet were both 93% confidence, then the one with the required NOBC was chosen.

I hope this helps a bit. The process is largely as you would expect it. It is very professionally run and I had confidence that in the short time provided we made the best choices possible for the Navy and for the officers applying for the billets.

CAPT Mark Ellis